



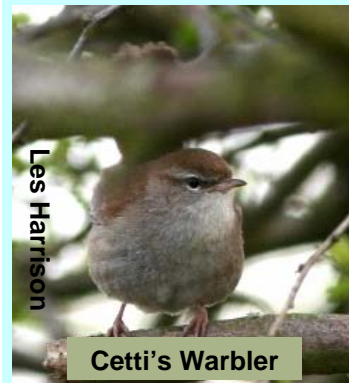
Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue Fifteen
November 2008



Good views come to those who wait: For over a year we have been building the Northern Boardwalk. A vast amount of time has been put in by our wardens, volunteers and corporate team challenges to complete this kilometre long section of the circular walk around the reserve. The idea is to take you on a fascinating winding journey right through the middle of a reedbed on the far side of the reserve.



Les Harrison

Cetti's Warbler

Well, it is now finished and is open to visitors, affording excellent elevated views over the newly enhanced Aveley Pools. There are two viewing platforms with ample seating and, as we expected, the wildfowl are not in the least bit bothered about the sudden growth in height of the local humans.

The wrens, robins, buntings, tits and water rails living in the reedmace and common reed seem quite happy with having visitors to their home and a vocal Cetti's warbler has already set up noisy territory alongside the path. We cannot wait for the summer when the vegetation will be alive with the sounds of amorous reed warblers and reed buntings but will still have the delights of the coming winter first and perhaps the return of our famous penduline tits? We can but hope!



Howard Vaughan

The final section!

Flying north for the winter? Migration gone wrong? Perhaps not... Now, many of you may have had a nice male blackcap wintering in your garden in recent years; perhaps arriving before Christmas and staying till early spring and spending its time munching berries or feasting on your fat balls? It used to be thought that these were birds that failed to migrate to Africa for the winter but they are now known to originate from countries like Germany and Austria. They now come to good old England for their winter holiday where the climate is more to their liking. They start to practice their singing nice and early before zooming back to their homeland weeks before those that have had to travel up from southern Africa, thus securing them the best territories and first females to return. Smart birds!

We also have a new member of the Rainham Marshes team who has got his migratory instincts muddled. Marc Fletcher is our new Visitors Services Manager and has joined us from the pleasant southern hemisphere climes of Cape Town, South Africa, to ensure that all our visitors have a great time. Arriving into the midst of a wet and wild English autumn with two inches of snow on his car in late October has been something of an eye opener but like most new winter visitors, we are sure that he will find suitable habitat and friends at Rainham Marshes to make him feel at home. Welcome on board!

Reserve Work: We temporarily 'pulled the plug' on Aveley Pool during October to allow the earthen shooting ridge across the middle to be strengthened using stone chippings. This will reduce wave erosion and help us to keep the water where we want it, allowing us to create better breeding habitats in future seasons.

The water from Aveley was not wasted and has helped top up all the wet features in front of the visitor centre. You will also see that we have started creating a brand new series of pools in the meadow that you will look out onto from the Marshland Discovery Zone and work is progressing apace on this whole area. Not only will the view from inside be fantastic but hopefully there will be dancing lapwings and redshanks outside come springtime.



Colin Bartholomew

New pools on the way!

If you wish to join our e-news group to receive future Marsh Matters please email and let us know.

All the images used in Marsh Matters are taken at RSPB Rainham Marshes.

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What's been about: October: The month got off to a great start with the first ever **treecreeper** for the site on 3rd-4th. This was followed on the 8th with not one but two **yellow-browed warblers** fresh in from China. One was seen again on the 10th while **black redstart** (5th and 29th), **redstart** (7th-8th) and a fine **ring ouzel** (8th) added autumnal interest.



Pete Livermore

Dartford Warbler

Finches were on the move with many **lesser redpolls** (including 50 on 17th), **siskins**, **linnets** and even a **bullfinch** seen. This arrival culminated on the 22nd when no less than four **serins** were found. This tiny continental finch is a very scarce visitor to Britain so when the number rose to at least five on the 29th we were gob-smacked! Two, normally coastal **twite** and a few **brambling** completed the month's unusual finch-fest which on the 26th totalled over 1000 birds!

The 22nd also heralded a brief visit from a lanky **Richard's pipit** with **rock**, **water** and **meadow**

companions and three **Dartford warblers** that managed to find the only patch of gorse on the reserve. **Gannet** (6th), **Arctic skua** (6th), **great skua** (12th), immature **shag** (8th) and **common scoter** (18th) kept eyes on the Thames while **short-eared owls** made a welcome return to the old silt lagoons along with one of our resident **barn owls**. Several **buzzards** and a **marsh harrier** moved through and **peregrine** sightings became more regular.



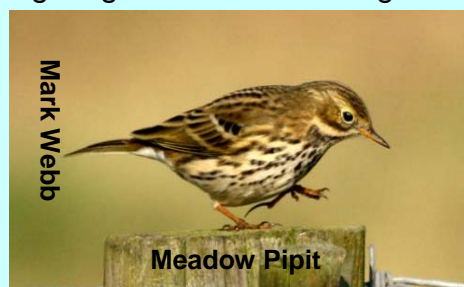
Jeff Delves

Serin



Tony Coombs

Rock Pipit



Mark Webb

Meadow Pipit

Little egrets lingered and a **glossy ibis** was seen briefly but well on the 21st; another new site bird. Gull watching produced a couple of **Mediterranean** and the first **Caspian gulls** of the autumn. Our local **Cetti's warblers** began to spread out with at least eight in song on the trail circuit while three **wheatears** on 31st were a little tardy in heading for Africa.



Tony Coombs

Devil's Coachman

Common darters and **migrant hawk** dragonflies were still on the wing as we headed into November; the **honey bees** were still swarming and **Devil's coachman** beetles were still out on the paths. Even the **marsh frogs** had not given up on their croaking. The bull **grey seal** was occasionally seen showing off his eel-catching skills to the cormorants.

Events: There are still a few slots left to arrange a meeting with **Santa** on **13-14 December** and for those in need of a pre-Christmas amble we have the traditional seasonal **Ramble** on Saturday 20 at 10am.

What's in the Shop? It's nearly Christmas and the shop is bursting with amazing gifts!



Even Howard Vaughan our Information Officer has bought a pair of the new HD binoculars. "They are here at last and worth every penny!"
Just £499 for either 8 or 10x42

What's On? Regular Events:

Weekly: Wednesday : **Birdwatch** (9.30am start)
Thursday **Healthy Living Walk** (12.15pm start)
Friday : **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

Monthly: Warden's Walk (11am start) on Sundays: 14 December, 11 January, 8 February
Wildlife Explorer Group (10am start) and **Kids Birdwatching Club** (9.30am start) :**December:** Saturday 13 & 6 respectively **January:** Saturday 10 & 17 respectively **February:** both Saturday 14.

For more information about the events, RSPB and Wildlife Explorer Group

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